Reformation
The Great DUTY
OF AN
Afflicted PEOPLE.

Setting forth
The SIN and DANGER there is in Neglecting of it, under the Continued and Repeated *JUDGMENTS* of GOD.

Being the Substance of what was Preached on a Solemn Day of HUMILIATION kept by the *Third* Gathered Church in Boston, on *AUGUST.* 23*d.* 1694.

By *SAMUEL WILLARD*,
Teacher of the said CHURCH.

Zech. 1. 3. *Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, turn unto Me saith the Lord of Hosts, and I will turn unto you saith the Lord of Hosts.*

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TO THE
READER.

Christian Reader,

HOW many ways Gods hand is out against this People, and that He hath now for a long time been managing a Controversy with us, in a course of awfull Afflictive Providences, is Obvious to him who is not willingly a Stranger in our Israel. *We have tried many ways for the removal of our troubles, and, among others have kept many Fasts, both Publick and Private, to seek an Atonement and obtain help from Heaven: many also, if not the most of our* Churches *have with Solemnity revived their* Covenant Obligations to God. *But that after all our Essays on this account, our distresses abide on us, and our perplexities are growing upon us, and God seems to blast our Enterprizes,*

prizes, to return our Prayers with anger upon us, to hide Counsel, and take away our Spirits from us; yea, & expose us to the Scorn of our enemies, the Language of the Providences we are now under speaks plainly: and what may be the meaning of these things? We are by Name and Profession a People of God; and there are great Promises *made to such, in case of their close walking with God: yea, and though they have Sinned, and brought troubles on themselves, if they truly* Repent, *and* Return *to Him. Doubtless if God had not been angry, we had not been thus Afflicted; and if he had not been Provoked by our Sins, He would not have been angry; and if we had hearkned to the* voice of the Rod, *it would have been removed, and not continued, and harder strokes inflicted. That which God expects of us is* **Reformation**; *and though this belongs to each of us personally; and if every one would take heed to himself, and mend one, the whole would be amended: there is a common concern lying upon us, as we are a People whose interests are bound up together; so God treats us in his Providence as a community. Doubtless then it is, that it is not like to be better with us as a People, till such a* Reformation *be promoved; and there are the measures and steps to be taken in it, which, it is to be feared, have hitherto been neglected. What these are the Scriptures will inform us, and the examples of Gods*

To the Reader.

People Recorded in them, do ſtand for our direction in this affair.

The deſign of the following Diſcourſe was only to ſhew the Neceſſity of this Duty, and to ſtimulate all that heard it, to do what is in their Compaſs towards the furtherance of ſuch a work. God is ſignifying to us, that nothing elſe will content Him; and He is yet in the way of His Judgments, *both giving us Opportunity to attend it; and loudly calling upon us ſo to do: and if this word added to the other manifeſt ſpeakings of our God to us, may Contribute to the awakning this People to a Serious ſetling about this Duty, and a vigorous purſuance of it; God ſhall have the Praiſe. It made, throngh Mercy ſome Impreſſion on the hearts of many hearers; if this Publication may be bleſſed to the fixing of it on ſuch, and to the rouſing of others, that we may be a truly* Reforming People, *and God may turn from His Anger; it will be found a* Word ſpoken in Seaſon; *To GODS Gracious Bleſſing I Commend it, Who am,*

the leaſt and moſt unworthy

of Miniſters,

SAMUEL WILLARD.

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Reformation the Great Duty of an Afflicted People.

Leviticus 26. 23. *If ye will not be Reformed by me by these things, but will walk Contrary unto me:*
Verse 24. *Then will I also walk Contrary unto you, and will Punish you yet Seven times for your Sins.*

IN this Chapter, from *Ver.* 3. after that God had, by *Moses* given to the People of *Israel* the several Statutes and Judgments, where unto he required their Cordial Obedience; he declares to them the *terms* of the *Covenant* between him and them, as he afterwards did in like manner, upon the rehearsal of the Law, a little before *Moses's* death, *Deut.* 28. which is the same for substance with this, though in words diversly expressed. In it there are three parts contained. 1. A declaration of those blessings which God did engage unto their obedience, to, *Ver.* 14. 2. A menace of such Judgments

as they ſhould be viſited withal in caſe of their diſobedience and obſtinacy: to *Ver.* 40. 3. A Promiſe made to them of mercy, and reſtauration, upon their repentance after all, to *Verſ.* 46. He is more briet in the account given of the firſt and laſt of theſe, but commorates more largely upon the ſecond.

Before I come to a more particular diſcourſing upon this matter, it will be requiſite that I remove an Objection out of the way; *Viz.* It may be, and it is ſaid by ſome, that theſe terms here propoſed are Legal, and therefore not proper to be applyed to us in Goſpel times, who are under another Covenant, and treated by God with other manner of diſpenſations towards us. To which let me briefly reply, that, though there were many and great differences in the manner of Gods diſpenſing of Himſelf to his People before and after the coming of *Chriſt* in the Fleſh, on the account of which diverſity that is more than once called the *Old Covenant*, and this a *New* one; the former being ſuited to the Childiſh, the latter to the Viriſe Age of the Church, as the Apoſtle illuſtrates it in, *Gal* 4. *begin.* Among which this was one, that God then treated them more with *Terrors*, and now more with *Promiſes*; Children needing more of ſeverity to be uſed with them, than ſuch as are grown to years

of

of a riper underſtanding: whence the moral Law was revived on Mount *Sinai* with *Thundrings and Lightnings*, and amazing terrours, which put a Conſternation into the People; and *Moſes* is uſually more large in the *Minatory* than the *Promiſſory* part of the Covenant. God alſo then more inſiſted on the External Conſiderations of Temporary Favours and Afflictions, whereas in the Goſpel ſuch as are Spiritual are more inculcated: yet the Covenant which God entred into with His People then, and that which He makes with us in the days of the Goſpel, is, for the ſubſtance, one and the ſame. All the *Covenants* which ever God made with men, are reducible to one of theſe two, *Viz.* either the Covenant of *Works*, or of *Grace*: and it is certain, that whatſoever Tranſaction there hath been in a Covenant way between God and man ſince Adams *Apoſtaſy*, is of *Grace*, that of *Works* being by the Fall, made unable any more *to give Life* unto man, *Gal.*3.21. and hence, though the *Moral Law* was renewed with this People, and Solemnly proclaimed unto them, yet *it was given in the hands of a Mediatour*, *Gal.*3.19. and it is to be Obſerved, that Gods Publick Tranſactions with any People, conſidered as they are a Body, referring to Mercies and Judgments, are reſtrained to this Life and World. The future

future Judgment of the Great Day ſhall not be of Communities as ſuch, for there will then be an end of them, but every one there and then muſt perſonally anſwer for himſelf. But here there are both Temporal and Spiritual Mercies and Miſeries, Bleſſings and Curſes to be diſpenſed unto ſuch according to their behaviour; we read that *Godlineſs hath the Promiſe of the life that now is*, 1 *Tim.*4.8. and that Gods People are *Judged in this World*, 1 *Cor.* 11.30. The Judgments therefore which befell the Church in the Wilderneſs, are propoſed to our Conſideration as Exemplary to us, and we are adviſed to take warning by them, that we may eſcape Suffering the like, 1 *Cor.*10.11.

Theſe things being thus premiſed, let us take a more particular view of the matter before us and here, (1.) It is ſuppoſed that a People thus circumſtanced may prevaricate; they may neglect to pay their due Obedience unto God which he requires of them, nay they may deſpiſe the Commands of God, and turn their backs upon them, *Verſe* 14,15. for this is the *Hypotheſis* upon which the threatning is built; and if it were not a thing poſſible, and that of which there was at leaſt ſome danger, the threatning would be Supervacaneous, and it is very Obvious that ſometimes a People that make a great

great pretence to Religion, will dare thus to do, and that notwithstanding the threatning stands as a thorn-hedge to keep them in; they will adventure upon it, although they Scratch themselves. (2.) God threatens to bring awful Judgments upon them in case they do so Transgress, *Verse* 16, 17. Their Covenant Relation, and their neerness to God by reason of it, shall be no security to them against the Miseries mentioned: Sin will *break down this hedge*, and let the *wild beasts* in upon them, to *devour* them. (3.) It is further presumed that these Judgments *will not amend* them, but that they will for-all persist in their *Apostasy*, and proceed yet to greater revolts: and this is supposed from one step to another, unto every one of which there is menaced a processe in the way of Judgments, and an Augmentation of their Miseries, till they come to the height: and this is mentioned four times, one whereof is in our Text, of which we may at present make some improvement for our Instruction.

The words are very *Emphatical*; I might Observe the various manner of expressing this, which is used in the four several instances; but I shall supersede that. In our Text is contained an *Hypothetical Comination*, in which Observe, 1. The *Hypothesis* it self,

Verse 23. and that is, that the Judgments which have been inflicted on them, do not *Reform* them; they are not reclaimed by them: *i. e.* they remain ſtill obſtinate, in which there are ſeveral things to be Noted. 1. It is ſuppoſed that they have before ſinned againſt the *Covenant*, ſo as to bring the Judgments of God upon themſelves: they are looked upon as a People under the effects of Divine diſpleaſure for their ſins. 2. It is preſumed that theſe Judgments ſo brought upon them have not obtained the proper end which was expected by them; where we have the aim or end pointed at, *Viz. to Reform them.* 3. It is looked upon to be after ſuch time as God hath been more than once trying of them in this way, and yet it hath not taken effect, or proved ſucceſsfull. The inſtance in our *Text*, is the *third* caſe mentioned, after the *firſt* trial of all had not ſucceeded. 4. The nature of this Impenitence is expreſſed in the *Hypotheſis.* 1. Negatively; *If ye be not Reformed.* 2. Poſitively; *but walk contrary unto me.* 2. Here is the Conſequent threatning in caſe ſuch be the event of former trial, *Ver.* 24. Where is pointed, 1. The manner of his carriage towards them, *I will walk Contrary to you.* 2. The Aggravation of the Puniſhment, *and will Puniſh you yet Seven times for your Sins.* I ſhall

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not here tarry to Criticiſe upon the words; if there be any Occaſion it may be remarked in the Sequel. There are ſeveral great practical Truths, ſuitable for the preſent Occaſion, which may be taken up from the words, and briefly improved.

DOCT. I. The Great deſign of all Gods Judgments on a Profeſſing People is to Reform them.

The word ſignifies *to bind*, and *Metaphorically to chaſten*, and then *Metonimically*, to *reform* or *reclaim*, that being the deſirable genuine effect of it; and ſo it muſt be here underſtood. When I ſay this is the deſign, I do not ſpeak of the end of the *purpoſe* which is ſecret; but of the *precept* which requires it, and of the Providence, which is ſaid to beſpeak it; this then is the *Revealed* and *Propoſed* end. This may be opened and cleared in a few things.

1. *That Publick Calamities may be the Lot of a Profeſſing People to meet withal.* This needs no proof, it being ſo manifeſtly exemplified in the Providence of God, in all the Ages of the Church, that we may as well queſtion the Suns ſhining at noon day in a clear sky. The true *Emblem* of the *Militant Church* is a *Buſh on fire*: ſuch a People are Obnoxious to God, to Devils, and to wicked men, and there

are Occaſions for their expecting to meet with trouble from them all.

2. *That uſually they procure theſe Afflictions to themſelves by ſome* Apoſtaſy. God may indeed exerciſe them for the *trial* of their Obedience, and ſincerity in it : Afflictions meerly probationary are not only ſuffered *Perſonally*, but may be *Publickly* too ; did not God do thus by the Kingdom of *Judah* under *Hezekiah*, in the time of a moſt zealous and through Reformation ? and there is an Aſteriſm put upon it, 2 *Chron.* 32. *begin. After theſe things, and the eſtabliſhment thereof, &c.* But, though God ſome times, for holy ends, thus uſeth his Sovereignty ; for the moſt part there hath ſome great Provocation or other gone before, which procured theſe troubles for them ; and this is very agreeable to the tenour of the *Covenant*, in which God hath engaged to beſtow his favours on a People that walk before him in the Truth, and therefore the Apoſtle hath ſuch a challenge, 1 *Pet.* 3. 13. *Who is he that will harm you, if you be followers of that which is good ?* And God himſelf thus expoſtulates with his People, when they were ſuffering his Judgments, *Jer.* 2. 17. *Haſt thou not procured this to thy ſelf, in that thou haſt forſaken the Lord thy God ?*

3. *That hence theſe Judgments are Gods Teſti-*

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mony that he beares againſt that ſin. They are the diſcoveries which he makes of the diſpleaſure that he takes at it; they are the *Tokens* of his anger by which he gives them to underſtaud how ill he reſents it that they have broken his Laws, and gone back from his Command: theſe therefore are, in Scripture language, called his *Anger*, his *Wrath*, his *Diſpleaſure*; becauſe they are the diſcoveries of it. When he brings them upon men, they feel that which beſpeaks him to be offended at them; they are ſuch things as are wont in men to proceed from ſuch a paſſion; and are aſcribed to him after the manner of men, in whom are no paſſions properly ſo called.

4. *They are of the Diſcipline which God, by Covenant, engageth to Exerciſe towards his People.* It is therefore one *Article* mentioned in the Covenant on this *Hypotheſis*, *Pſal.* 89. 30. *&c. If his Children forſake my Law, &c. then will I viſit their tranſgreſſions with the Rod, and their iniquity with ſtripes.* And the Apoſtle expreſſeth it as ſo, *Heb.* 12. 6. *He ſcourgeth every ſon whom he receiveth. i. e.* He receiveth him on ſuch terms. It is therefore called a *Rod*, which is uſed for *Diſcipline*, and not for *Ruine*: they are called *Corrections*, which, though they have anger in them, and ſuppoſe a fault which procures them, is yet tempered with love, which manageth the anger for good.

And alwayes Correction is Adminiſtred for *Reformation* of the party that undergoes it.

5. *Theſe Judgments are to be annumerated to the* long-ſuffering *which God uſeth towards a ſinning People.* This therefore is Attributed to him, and is to be read in theſe diſpenſations. As he waits before he ſmites them, ſo he waits in ſmiting of them, and what is this for, but to ſee for their amendment if it may thus be obtained? Hence that, *Hoſ.*5.15. *I will go &c. in their Affliction they will ſeek me early.* And indeed there is a great deal of Mercy in it; God corrects when he might cut off; he afflicts inſtead of deſtroying, which they deſerved, and might have ſuffered, if he had ſtrained the advantage offered him. This is the Churches acknowledgment, *Lam.*3.22, *It is of the Lords mercy that we are not conſumed.* And ſo the good man, *Neh.*9.31. *For thy great mercies ſake, thou didſt not utterly conſume them.*

6. *God is wont, with theſe Judgments, to ſend them invitations to Repentance, and offers of his favours if they Repent.* This is a priviledg that a People in Covenant with God do enjoy, that not only doth he warn and advile them before he ſmites, that ſo, if it might be, blows might be prevented; but whiles he is ſmiting too: he calls upon them now to *Conſider their ways, Hag.* 1.5. *i. e.* whiles they are under afflictions. He tells them that he doth

doth not thirſt for their blood, or ſeek opportunities to ruine them; but would have them to turn that they may prevent it, and he declares it ſolemnly, *Ezek.* 33.11. *As I live, I delight not in the Death &c. Turn ye, Turn ye, why will ye Die, Oh houſe of Iſrael?* And he Declares that if they do turn he will receive them, and turn his anger away from them, *Jer.* 3.22. *Return ye backſliding Children, and I will heal your backſlidings; and ſo Chap.*4. 1.

7. *God hath been wont, upon their Reformation, to avert his Judgments from his People.* This is a courſe that hath not uſed to fail. How often did he do ſo for his People of old! as we ſhall find upon Record in Scripture Hiſtory: Nay ſuch hath been the pitty which he hath extended to them in this regard, that when their Reformation hath been feigned, and not upright, yet he hath delivered them for-all, and that many a time, as is intimated in *Pſal.*78.34. *&c.* how much more then will he do ſo when it is hearty, and ſincere? it is a very remarkable paſſage in, *Judg.* 10. 15,16.

8. *Hence the reaſon why God hath at any time proceeded to Extirpate a Profeſſing People hath been their* Impenitence. When neither word nor rod, neither warnings nor Judgments would prevail with them to return, but they have remained obſtinate under all; ſee an account of this,

this, 2 *Chron.* 36.15,16. He waited *till there was no remedy*; no other course to be taken: all their other Provocations, though never so many and heinous, would never have brought it to this, if they had not added contumacy to their Apostasy; hence we have God using of that Expostulation with them, *Isai* 48.18,19.

USE. I. Learn hence, *That if a Professing People perish at last, they must blame themselves.* Well might God say to them as he did, *Hos.* 13.9. *Oh Israel! thou hast destroyed thy self.* All the sore Judgments and Calamities, which God brings upon a sinning People, are not in themselves any Symptom of their ruine; are not a sure token that God hath forsaken them; though sometimes *Zion*, when sorely visited with them, is ready to say *My God hath forgotten me*; but they are on the other hand, an argument that God is loth to destroy them, and therefore he first tries whether by such Judgments this may not be prevented. What the Apostle saith, 1 *Cor.* 11. 32. *When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be Condemned with the World*; is here applicable. God by Afflicting of a sinfull People, shews that he would not destroy them, unless they themselves are resolved upon their own destruction. There is a *Voice* in the *Rod*, and he would have them to

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hear it, and him who hath appointed it, Mic.6.9. And he hath more than once ſaid it, that if they will hear, it ſhall be well with them for all: if then they will not hear, but ſtop their ears at this voice, and harden their hearts againſt the advice of it, and ſo they periſh, where is the fault?

USE. II. Let this then ſerve to point us to our preſent Duty. It tells us what it is that is now incumbent on us. We are a people whom God hath *taken near* to Himſelf, who have been priviledged with his Covenant favours and bleſſings; whom he hath done many and great things for: but he hath ſignally altered the courſe of his Providence towards us, and brought us under his rod; his hand is many ways out againſt us, and we are made *low*; he hath *waſted us by ſmiting us* many ways, and we are reduced to great diſtreſſes. And what is all this for but our iniquities? if we had not revolted from him, he would not have thus Afflicted us: our peace, and our proſperity might have continued uninterrupted, and he would have delighted in it. What then remains, but that we ſet upon a real and a through **Reformation**? And let us be ſerious in it. Are there not the things among us that need Reforming? Is there not a fearful decay of love, and zeal,

and holineſs among us? is not almoſt every thing that can be thought of out of order amongſt us? and is our God now manifeſting of the diſlike that he takes at it? What have we to do then, but to ſet upon this work in good earneſt? Let all orders of men be invited to it. Let us all *Search, and try, and Turn, Lam.* 3.40. And to move us, Conſider,

1. *God is waiting to be gracious.* Whatever diſplays he gives us of his righteous anger, and they are awfull, yet ſtill he is to be *Sought in the way of his Judgments, Iſa.* 26. 8. though he be ſcourging of us by his Afflictive Providences, yet he is ſtill *hearkening to hear* if there be any inclination in us this way; if there be the leaſt motions or ſtirrings in our hearts towards it; and he will take it well of us if there be; he therefore makes that complaint on this account; *Jer.* 8. 6. *I hearkned and heard, but none ſpake aright, &c.*

2. *Hence, if we do Reform, there is hope:* May not we ſay as he did, *Ezra.* 10.2,3. *We have treſpaſſed againſt our God, yet now there is hope in Iſrael concerning this thing, now therefore let us make a Covenant with our God.* And obſerve what great incouragment there is given for our ſo doing, *Joel* 2.12. *&c.* God is merciful and gracious, and ready to *Repent of the evil,* and he hath his end in ſmiting of us,

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if this may but be obtained, the design of Corrective Providences is fully answered, and so the controvesy is ended when once it arrives at this. *Why then do we sit still?* Why *do we pine away in our iniquities*, because we do not put them away from us? let us be up and doing, and the Lord will accept of us.

DOCT. II. A declined Professing People, may meet with sore Judgments, and yet remain unreformed under and after them.

This is supposed and presumed in our Text, and remember, it is the fourth step in the Process of Gods judicial dispensations towards them; and we are not to think such things are here supposed which may not be. We shall therefore find awfull instances of this truth upon record in the word of God, giving us to understand that it hath been so *in Thesi.* What great pains did God afterwards take with this People for their *Reformation*, when they had forgotten the works that he had done in *Egypt*, and in the Wilderness, and were revolted from him? and yet what was the issue of all? although *He sent all his servants the Prophets to them, rising up early and sending them*, by whom he laid evident Convictions of their sins, before them, gave them awfull warnings of his Judgments impending,

and urged upon them ſolemn and ſerious invitations to repent, with the faireſt promiſes of his favour in caſe of their compliance therewithall: and though he laid many and ſevere ſtroaks upon them, bringing of them low for their iniquities, waſting them every way; yet to what purpoſe was it? what effect did it work in them? We are told, that God *would have purged them, but they were not purged*; this is the complaint that is made againſt them in *Ezek.* 24.13. They *held faſt their deceit, and would* not let it goe, *Jer.* 8.5. 8. ſo it went on; nor is this at all to be wondered at, if we ſhall Conſider;

1. *The body of a Profeſſing People are not always truly gracious.* To be ſure, in times wherein there is a decay of holineſs, and increaſe of impiety, it is not like to be ſo. All are not Iſrael that are of Iſrael. There is indeed a bored ear in the Children of God, that doth encline them to be ready to hearken to the voice of the Rod, and to be awakened to diſcipline; to be of a tender heart, and reſent the diſpleaſure of God; this is the natural and genuine working of Grace in the heart wherein it really planted. But all are not ſo who are the People of God by exterternal denomination, and a verbal profeſſion. When *Apoſtaſy* begings to creep upon a People, Converſion work begins to be more rare,

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and men are not ſo frequently brought home to God by a through and ſaving change wrought in them: *Hypocriſy* and *Luke warmneſs* begins to get head and prevail, and the power of Godlineſs ceaſeth, and men reſt contented in *a name to live whiles they are dead*. We have the Character of ſuch a Church fully repreſented to us in that of *Laodicea*, in, *Rev.* 3.14. *&c.* And it is not ſeldom exemplified in the world, where the name of Chriſt is taken up.

2. *Gods own Children are ſometimes judicially left under obſtinate frames.* It is the mournfull expoſtulation of the Church, *Iſa.*63.17. *O Lord, why haſt thou made us to erre from thy wayes, and hardned our hearts from thy fear?* And though there be a Principle of ſaving grace in them, which enclines them to an holy fear; yet they have a body of death too, which hath its influence on them, and that ſo powerfull, that they are drawn by it into the ſins of the times and places they live in, and God is diſpleaſed at them for it, and ſo he awfully leaves them to have their ears ſtopt, ſo as not to give ear, as they ought to do, to the warnings he gives, and the Judgments which he inflicts. We have inſtances for this in *Eli*, *David*, *Aſa*, ſerving to let us underſtand, how far holy men may, under deſertion provoke their Father to diſpleaſure

and thereby open away for more temporal Judgments to come upon them.

3. *Natural men have no true liking to the ways of God.* They are in their ſins, and ſo their hearts are ſet for ſin. Luſt hath Dominion in them, and all the powers of their Souls are engaged for it; their underſtanding approves it, *calls evil good*; their wills give it the preference, and ſo makes choiſe of it and their affections are ſet upon it. Hereupon, their cloſe keeping to Duty, and their abſtinence from ſin is a forced thing, and againſt the whole bent of their natures; it is a yoke that doth not ſit eaſy on their necks, but feels very irkſome to them: and this makes them in a readineſs to ſhake it off, and glad of an opportunity ſo to do; and ſuch opportunities, the times of declenſion afford enough of to them: when many ſins grow common, and not ſo ſcandalous, and witneſs begins not to be born againſt them as ſometimes, now the before hidden corruption looks forth and ſhews its head: and when once they are gotten into ſuch a way, they are willing to *hold it faſt*, and care not for being diſturbed in it, or turning away from it: hence that complaint, *Jer.* 5. 23. *This People hath a revolting and rebellious heart, they are revolted and gone.*

4. *Afflictions, or Judgments, have not in themſelves*

s the vertue of Reforming a backſlidden Peo-
They are indeed made uſe of by God
his purpoſe, and if he pleaſeth to influ-
them they ſhall be ſervicable to the fur-
ance of it, and ſuitable *moral* arguments
be drawn from them for conviction and
kning; but they cannot alone work any
ious effect: except *Correction* and *Inſtructi-*
go together, there is no good like to be
e. Hence that, *Pſal.* 94. 12. *Bleſſed is the*
whom thou chaſteneſt, O Lord, and teacheſt
out of thy Law, otherwiſe, *Bray a fool in a*
er among wheat with a Peſtil, yet will not
foolishneſs depart from him. Prov. 27. 22.
n might indeed know, if they would, what
ictions come for, and that would be a
to Reformation, if there were a through
nviction upon the Conſcience; but there
o kindly working upon the heart by this
ne. Unſanctified Afflictions, being miſ-
roved by the native corruption that is in
n, will make him worſe, and more obſti-
e, inſtead of mending him; 2 *Chron.* 28.
And in the time of his diſtreſs he did yet
paſs more againſt the Lord.

. *Sinfull men are hard to be perſwaded to*
ve that they are the guilty cauſes of the Judg-
ts that are upon Gods People. Men indeed are
at ſuch times to make a fearfull cry againſt
alk much of the Provocation that is given

to

to God, as if they had a mind to find it out and have it removed : but yet every one is apt to put it off from himself and lay it upon others. There is a great deal of noise made at such a time, but what is there in it ? If we observe we shall find, that it is only throwing dirt one upon another ; but as for themselves, they are clear and innocent ; they have nothing to accuse themselves of ; if others would have been as carefull as they, this might have been avoided. How doth God make such a complaint as this ? *Jer.* 8.6. *I hearkned and heard, but they spake not aright : no man repented him of his wickedness, saying what have I done ?* There is such a sottishness in men, that they cannot think their ways are perverse, they can see no evil in them, so are they charged, *Isa.* 44.20. *A deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his own soul, nor say, is there not a lie in my right hand ?*

6. *Hence, till God powers out his Spirit upon them, men do remain thus stupid and senseless.* There must be an inward working upon the hearts of men by the Spirit of God, if ever they are by his Judgments wrought up to Reformation. Till he gives them eyes to see, and hearts to consider, they continue as sottish as ever. Let one Judgment come upon them in the neck of another, let them be broken, wasted, consumed, and almost laid desolate,

ſolate, and they are obdurate ſtill; all this
ll not melt down their hard hearts, or bring
em to any kindly complyance with God.
is an obſervation made by the Prophet,
42. 25. *Therefore he hath poured upon him*
fury of his anger, and the ſtrength of battel:
it hath ſet him on fire round about, yet he
w it not; and it burned him, yet he laid it
to heart.

USE. *I.* Learn hence, *That Judgments a-*
e, are not a ſure ſign that God hath a purpoſe
good for ſuch a People as ſuffer by them. It is
e, they do bear witneſs for God, that he
very loth to deſtroy them, if it might in a-
other way be prevented; they ſay that he
God of great patience, and that he is
iting for the repentance of ſuch a People,
t ſo he may yet be favorable to them and
abliſh them; elſe he could as eaſily have
them off at a ſtroak, and muſt have been
tified in his doing ſo. But ſtill, we can
ake no certain Judgment of the iſſue, till
ſee what influence and efficacy theſe Judg-
ents have upon them; the concluſion is ſtill
ſpended. If once they appear to work
ndly, and begin to awaken them to enquire
to the provocation, and ſeriouſly to ſet about
e work of Reformation, there is then a good
pe offered us, that all will end well at laſt.

But if ſtill they do not reform; nay, if reiterated Judgments do not produce ſuch an effect as this is on them, but they ſtill perſiſt in their evil wayes, and are rather hardned in them by theſe Afflictions, there is abundant reaſon given us to be very doubtfull what it will come to at the laſt.

USE. II. Let it then put us upon the enquiry, What effect all the ſtroaks of God which we have felt, have wrought on us. And it is of no ſmall conſequence that we do in good earneſt make this enquiry, as will more evidently appear in the following Obſervations. That we have been under the diſcipline of Gods Judgments is not to be called in queſtion; let us then ſee to it what is the fruit of all upon us; we are here given to underſtand that all ſo treated are *not reformed*; and it is not every thing that looks fair, which will amount to the *Reformation* which God expects. It is not crying out of ſin in general, nor calling of Solemn Aſſemblies, Faſting, Praying, Confeſſing, Petitioning, renewing of Covenants, making of Laws, putting away of ſome more groſs and enormous ſins that are apparently provoking, that will anſwer Gods expectation, and ſo put a ſtop to his anger, and turn away his Judgments from us. It is another manner of thing to *Reform*. Let us then be

very inquiſitive into this matter, and make diligent ſearch about it. If we think that e have done it, or are in the way to the oing of it, when there is no ſuch thing, we all miſerably deceive our ſelves; and it ill be no little damage that will ariſe to us om it. And one would think that a ſmall nquiry upon this account, would be ſufficit both to convince and condemn us: there ath been ſo much of notorious ſlightineſs d neglect in this regard, that it is hard to y what one thing hath been amended: and we ſhall call all that we have hitherto been oing, a *Reformation*? will not God upbraidgly ſay to us, *Is this the Reformation, that I ve required*? is this the thing that you have ade ſo much of a talk and doe about? this all that you intend?

DOCT. III. If Gods Judgments do not reform a backſlidden People, the blame lies in their wilfulneſs.

Hither the Lord chargeth it, not if you o not, but if ye will not reform. All the *penitency* of a backſlidden People is the effect their *obſtinacy*. This is not to be underood ſo, as if they did not labour of *Impotency* themſelves, or as if they had a power in emſelves to reform themſelves, which is the iſtaken inference which ſome draw from

such Scriptures as charge sin upon mans wilfulness. No, it must be granted that they cannot reform themselves; although it is also certain that externally, or with respect to practice, they might do a great deal more than they doe; and that will manifestly declare them *inexcusable*: but truly to turn from sin, and cordially to return to God from whom they have departed, is a work above their ability, and the Spirit of God must powerfully work it in them, if ever it be done. But still God is wont to lay the blame of their not being *Reformed*, not upon their impotency, but their wilfulness. Thus *Matth.* 23.37. *How often would I have gathered thy Children, but ye would not. Joh.* 5.40. *Ye will not come unto me*; and here lies the height of the wickedness of it; and that it is so, will be made to appear, if we consider these three things.

1. *That a principal part of the natural impotency of men, lies in the* pravity *of their* wills. It is true, mans whole nature and all the faculties in him are debilitated, sin having a rooting in them all, and robbed them of the *Image* of God, by which once man was fitted with ability for his work; but as the will is the leading faculty in the man, so is the impotency of it very notorious. That sin which men are full of, hath laid fast hold on them.

hem, and engaged their hearts to it, and they ave made choiſe of it, and that according to he dictates of a depraved underſtanding: for hat being filled with crooked *principles*, auſing it to judge perverſly of things, and quite contrary to what they are in reality, ath drawn away the will after it, unto a ſpon-eneous and deliberate Election and Embrace-ment of theſe deluſions; and by their will it s that men *hold faſt deceit*, *Jer.*8.5. Their ſins ave thus gained not only their *Approbation*, o preferre them before holineſs, but alſo heir *Affections*; they love the ways of iniqui-y, and that makes them to adhere to them; *Jer.*2.25. *I have loved ſtrangers, and after them I will goe.* And hereby their wills are be-come ſo impotent, that they cannot make a better choiſe of themſelves, or by their own power: and yet all this is *voluntary*; there is no outward force laid upon them to cauſe them thus to do, but it is a fruit of the native Corruption which is in them.

2. *That men do wilfully ſhut their eyes againſt the Convictions wich are laid before them, by which they might be led to* Reformation. The Afflictions themſelves which they ſuffer, are for *Conviction*; there is ſuch a deſign in them, God ſends them for ſin, and they are to *bring it to remembrance*; they have a *Voice* in them, and it is intelligible; they ſay that God is

angry with ſuch a People, and they ſerve to put men upon enquiry after the cauſe of them; even the *Philiſtines* themſelves are led by the light of nature to ask ſuch a queſtion when the hand of God is upon them, acknowledging that it was from him, and thereupon to conſult how they might obtain a removal of it, 1 *Sam.* 6. *begin.* Yea, and many times the Judgments bring light in and with them, to diſcover the ground of the controverſy, and point to the very ſin againſt which they are witneſſes. *Adonibezek* was thus brought to a Confeſſion of his cruelty, and Gods juſt vindication, *Judg.* 1. 7. But beſides this, when God comes to puniſh a People that are in Covenant with him, he is wont, together with theſe troubles, to ſend them matter of Conviction in his *Ordinances*, to awaken his Servants in the Miniſtry; to touch their hearts, and ſuggeſt to them the things that he contends for, and make them to *Cry aloud and not to ſpare*, but to *ſhew his People the ſins* they are guilty of; and to do it with all evidence and demonſtration; ſo that if men would but liſten and give ear to theſe cryes and Convictions, they might be throughly convinced and not be able to withſtand. But the reaſon why they do not thus do, is becauſe *they will not.* What they ſaid plumply to the Prophet, *Jer.* 44. 16. *As for the word that thou haſt ſpoken*

us in the name of the Lord, we will not hark-
unto thee. Theſe ſay the ſame practically,
hich amounts to as much in the event, and
ſo interpreted by God as if their tongues
d uttered it: and this is to be charged on
that do not take the warnings, and bring
emſelves to the light of the truth, that they
ay know their ſins. And what is the reaſon
hy they will not readily receive the light,
t ſhut their eyes againſt it, and do what in
em lies to keep it out? it is becauſe they
e reſolved to hold on their ſinfull courſes,
d would be quiet in it; which that they
ay, they would prevent the reflexions of
nſcience, which is moſt likely be done by
eeping them in the *dark*; our Saviour tells
how it is, and why it is ſo in this regard,
oh. 3.19,20. *Mens ways* are evil, and they are
raid to know that they are ſo, and to be
proved for them; they therefore reſolve to
ſiſt all the means that might bring them to
knowledge of themſelves and their evil
oings.

3. *That men will not receive the help which*
herwiſe they might have, to remove all the o-
er impediments of their Reformation. It is
ue, none can turn themſelves, till God put
his Grace and turn them, he muſt firſt draw
, before we can run after him: it was a
ght Prayer which *Ephraim* put up, *Jer.* 31.
18.

18. *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned.* But God, in his Ordinances, offers to his People, together with reproofs, all the Assistance and Grace that is wanting to the doing of that which he requires of them: he useth all means and endeavours with them, tendring them his hand, but they reject him, they *will have none of him*, they had rather go without his help; they are not willing to be rid of their sins: they are therefore said to *resist his Spirit*; and hereupon, the reason rendred why God at length *leaves them up* to their sinfull wayes, and gives them over to their vile courses to sin without any restraints, is because they would not accept of these his gracious offers, *Psal.*81.11,12. *My People would not hearken to my voice, &c. So I gave them up to their own hearts lust; &c.*

USE. I. Learn hence, *How inexcusable we shall be, if under all Gods Judgments we* Reform *not.* Men are ready to think they have a great deal to plead for themselves by way of excuse: alas! if God do not give them Grace to repent and reform, how should they ever do it? They have no power of themselves, and if they should attempt it, what would it turn to? If therefore they ly in their sins, and *pine away in their iniquities*, how can they help it? This seems to be the meaning of their

Language

anguage in, *Ezek.* 33. 10. But this will not ſtand
nen in any ſtead. If indeed men had a heart
o it, and eager deſire after it; if they were
eally for it, and uſed cordial endeavours after
; if they did truly bewail this impotency of
heirs, and cry out importunately and heartily
o God for his help againſt it, as thoſe that
vere weary of their ſins, and would fain be
id of them, and God ſhould refuſe them his
Grace, and with-hold this neceſſary help from
nem, ſomthing then were to be pleaded: But
vhen was it ever ſo? When did God with-
old his Grace from ſuch as did indeed deſire
, and ask for it? He hath promiſed, and al-
vayes practiſed the contrary. No, no, the
ill is in it, we are ſet againſt it, we have
hoſen our own ways, they beſt pleaſe us, we
annot part with them; God calls us once and
gain, and he ſmites us at one time and ano-
ner, and we ſtop our ears at him, turn our
acks upon him, ſhut our eyes, and harden our
earts. And what can ſuch a people ſay for
nemſelves, againſt whom it will be proved
nat they were wilfully ſet in their own way,
n deſpite of all courſes uſed to reclaim them?
Vhoever excuſed ſuch as wilfully tranſgreſſed?
his is that which all mens reaſon accounts a
Conſideration that takes away all excuſe.

USE. II. Let this then ſerve to convince and

humble us in this regard, and doubtleſs we have great Occaſion for it. Hath not God been uſing all manner of endeavours with us, to bring us to a ſight and ſence of our ſins, and to make us know that it is an evil and a bitter thing that we have forſaken him to ſuch a degree as we have, and that feelingly by the ſenſe of all thoſe ſharp ſtroaks that he hath laid upon us; and there have been many of them, and no little of his ſeverity exerciſed in them: and hath he not the mean while been ſending as many faithful warnings, cleer Convictions, and awakning loud calls in his Houſe and Ordinances, and that from time to time? Have not *all his Servants* been unanimouſly engaged in this deſign? Hath there been any thing wanting as to means? *What more could he have done, than what he hath done?* Nay have we not been convinced in our Conſciences, and enforced by them to make Confeſſions upon this account? Hath he not alſo kindly invited us to lay hold on his ſtrength, and be at peace with him? offering us all fair terms in the treaty he hath been holding all this while with us? What is the reaſon then that there is no more *Reformation* wrought in the midſt of us? Have we been willing, and God unwilling? He will certainly make us to know that there is no ſuch matter ere he hath done with us. How then ſhould this confound

us,

and lay us in the duſt before him? How ould it fill us with ſhame, and cloath us in ckcloth? Let us then ſee and confeſs the ughtineſs of our own hearts, and take the ame home to our ſelves; let us acknowledge *Ephraim*, *Jer.*31.18. *We have been as a bul-k unaccuſtomed to the yoak.* This is the great mplaint which we have at this day to make our ſelves before God, and bitterly to be-ail it in his preſence, that *we have hardned r hearts againſt him*; that we have obſtinate-ſet our ſelves to withſtand all the attemps hich he hath been uſing to reclaim us. And us *be no more ſtiff necked*, but bring theſe rd hearts of ours to him to have them made nder, and beg of him to take the ſtone out them, and work them to a true compliance ith his will; that we may have a true re-ntment of all his Judgments and be humbled nder them: and if this may be obtained, e are in fair way to be reformed; and then ere will be a good hope that he will return id ſave us. And what a happy day would is prove for us, if it might come to this iſſue?

DOCT. IV. An unreformed Profeſſing People do all the while walk contrary to God.

Thus he interprets it, *Text.* This is the very nſe that he puts upon it; in the *Hebrew* it is,

ſhall walk with me contrarily. And the manner of expreſſion ſeems to have ſomething obſervable in it, noting, a pretence of being his people, and making it their deſign to walk with him, *i.e.* in conformity to his commands; and yet a carrying of it *contrary* to the pretence of their practice. And the phraſe notes an Oppoſition, or a ſetting of themſelves againſt God. And that ſuch a people as do not, will not reform, do thus, will appear on the Conſideration of theſe things.

1. *All Apoſtaſy is a revolting from God.* A People that are in Covenant with him, have acknowledged and ſubmitted to his Sovereignty over them; they have owned him to be their *Lord*, and their *King*, and their *Law-giver*: and bound themſelves to yield obedience to all his commands; promiſed that *all that the Lord ſhall ſpeak unto them, they will do it.* Now God hath given them his Orders, according to which he expects that they ſhould regulate themſelves, and therein give a Teſtimony of their loyalty to him: Every profeſſing people are *brought under this bond of the Covenant.* When therefore they depart from his obedience, and *turn aſide to their crooked wayes*, they therein depart from their Allegiance. Hence it is called a *revolting*, *Jer.*5.23. *They are revolted, & gone*: and the name of *revolters* is put upon them, *Chap.*6.28. *They are all grievous revolters*

And what is this but a ſetting of themſelves againſt him? A Rebel is certainly, by his rebellion ſet againſt his lawfull Prince.

2. *Hence a continuance in this Apoſtaſy, muſt needs be a maintaining of that Contrariety.* They fell into this way by their departure from him, and they walk on in it by their impenitency; hereby they do, as it were, fortify themſelves againſt him, ſtrengthen themſelves in their rebellion. Every new act of diſobedience to his Commands, is a renewed actual oppoſing of themſelves unto him; and by every ſuch act they do as much as ſay, that they are reſolved to withſtand him. The life of man is compared to a *walk*, and every action that is done in it, is a *ſtep* in that walk; and ſo long as they are out of the right way, and ſtill going, they do but increaſe their revolt. Every ſinner is a *Rebel*; he that perſiſts in his ſin, is an *hardned rebel*; and this muſt needs be a wofull contrariety to God. God is then only complied with when men do repent of their ſins, for that is it which he requires of them; wilfull impenitence then is a ſetting of themſelves to oppoſe this will of his; and what can be more contrary than this?

3. *They do hereby ſet themſelves againſt all the attempts that God is uſing with them for the reclaiming of them.* God always, when a people of his Covenant begin to decline from his

Precepts, to apply ſeaſonably and ſuitably to them for their recovery, that ſo the breakings forth of his hot anger may be prevented: on this account he tells them of their declinings, invites them to return ſpeedily, and not go on, warns them of the danger they lay themſelves open to, threatens them with his rods in caſe they hear him not, yea, and when is put to it, he ſmites them with his Judgments; and all this to recover them; but they do all they can to make void theſe attempts, and this is a woful *contrariety*: their neglecting to reform under ſuch eſſays uſed with them, is to ſet themſelves againſt all the pleadings of God, to *quench* all the motions and ſtirrings of the *Spirit* in them, to withſtand all the calls of the Judgments that are upon them, in which God cries aloud to them to return and to reform: thus they ſet their wills againſt his will; he ſaith to them, *Turn from your evil courſes, amend your ways and your doings*: but they do not; and that is in effect to ſay that they will not, and this interpretation God puts upon it. Thus, as much as they can, they ſeek to make all the pains that God takes with them to be in vain; and what is this but to *walk contrary*?

4. *They do hereby provoke God to jealouſy, and dare him to do his worſt.* In this way ſuch a people are found to *be fighters againſt him*. They that will not be reformed by theſe things,

do

do caſt a great contempt upon His Judgments: this is interpretatively to deſpiſe them, and ſpeaks that ſuch do preſume to be too hard for God at the laſt; we find what a ſence God himſelf puts upon it, *Iſa.*28.15. *Ye have ſaid, we have made a Covenant with death, &c. when the overflowing Scourge ſhall paſs through, it ſhall not come nigh us, &c.* And we have the Apoſtle thus expoſtulating on the account, 1 *Cor.*10. 22. *Do we provoke the Lord to jealouſy? are we ſtronger than he?* God ſaith, that if they will not reform, he will heap his Plagues upon them, and multiply their Calamities; and they ſay, their carriage ſpeaks it, let him do it if he will, they are not concerned about it; they are purpoſed to run the adventure of it, and try whether he will do as he ſaith: and what greater contrariety can there be than this? This is to beat a challenge to heaven, and *run up againſt the thick boſſes of his buckler.* This ſhews that they are ſet againſt him; which muſt needs be a very bold and daring preſumption.

5. *And herein they withſtand his glory, and ſeek his diſhonour.* When men are affected with the tokens of his diſpleaſue, and are brought to confeſs and forſake thoſe ſins which have procured it, and in this way addreſs him for his pardon and favour, they do therein give glory to God: this is to throw down their arms, and reſign themſelves to him, and he reckons himſelf

himself to be honoured by their so doing. But when they do wilfully maintain their sins, and will not kindly *accept of the punishment of them*, they do hereby cast reproach upon him. They do withstand the glory of his *holiness*, whiles they pretend to be his people, to have his name called upon them, and yet they will *live after the manner of the heathen*; and for all that, presume that he *who is a God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and cannot endure sin*, should own them to be his, and favour them, and patronize their abominations, like them, *Jer.*7.9. *Steal, Murder, commit Adultery &c. and come in to this house, and say we are delivered to do all these abominations.* And if this be not to dishonour him, what can be? Moreover they slight his *Power*, in that they are not afraid to irritate him to exert it, *briars and thorns thus set themselves in battel against the devouring fire*; and they cast contempt upon his *Justice*, as if he would connive at such sins, and would not *visit them for these things.* They open the mouths of Adversaries against him, who here upon take Occasion to Blaspheme his great name; and they slight his *Authority* over them, whiles they withdraw their necks from under his yoke, and deny him the due Obedience: and surely all this carries in it an horrible contrariety to him.

USE. I. Learn we hence, how dangerous a thing it is to live and ly in any sin unrepented of.

Doth God put ſuch an account upon it? doth he reckon all ſuch to walk contrary to him? ſurely then it muſt ſtir up his anger, and provoke him to wrath againſt them: it will kindle the fire of his fury, and make it to burn up into a fearfull flame, and how terrible muſt this needs be? The Apoſtle thought it ſo, *Heb.*10.31. *It is a fearfull thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* Surely then it is a daring adventure of thoſe that will expoſe themſelves upon this hazard, and, as it were, force him to take them in hand, and be revenged on them, and needs muſt it iſſue in the unſpeakable miſery of all thoſe that will be ſo bold. Obſerve what a challenge God maketh upon this account, *Iſa.*27.4. *Who would ſet the briars and thorns againſt me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together*; we may eaſily ghueſs how it is like to determine in the winding up: we have an account of the unhappy ſucceſs that is like to come of ſuch an unequall duell, *Job* 15.24,25,26. Shall a Potſherd of the earth ſtrive with his Maker, and hope to come off with any thing leſs than ruine?

USE. II. Let it then be an awakning word of warning unto us. And we are not a little concerned in it. We have out of doubt *fallen by our iniquity*: we have gotten too far away from God; we have beyond diſpute *turned*

aſide to things that cannot profit. All ſin is againſt God; and to be ſure every departure from any of theſe ways of his which he hath enjoyned us in the obſervance of, is ſo: and there is a great deal of this to be found in the midſt of us: and let me aſſure you, it is not a thing to be ſlighted or diſregarded: as light a matter as we may make of it, and think what hurt is there in it, or what perils are we expoſed to by it? Yet God reckons it a ſetting our ſelves againſt him. Well, but have we thus done through our folly? yet have a care of continuing in this unhappy poſture: take heed of walking on in this contrariety, if nothing be done to remove it, God will charge it home upon us; and what ſhall we expect at his hands if he ſo doth? ſurely it will be *impar congreſſus*, the damage will fall upon us and not upon him; we muſt needs be the ſufferers in the end, and not he: he will be too hard for us, there is all reaſon for us to lot upon this before we begin: it is a queſtion which he would have a ſinfull People ſtudy an anſwer to, *Ezek.* 22.14. *Can thine heart endure? can thine hand be ſtrong, in the day that I ſhall deal with thee?* Our *Impotency* will never make a match for his *Omnipotency*. What a call then is this to our ſpeedy and undelayed returning to him? Are we ſet in oppoſition to the great God? let us quit this ſtation, and ſeek to be reconciled.

reconciled. It it the advice which is given in this regard, *Isa.*27.5. *Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me*: and our only safety will be in following of it. Be we then advised to follow this counsel, and we shall find it for our good.

DOCT. V. God in punishing of such a people walks contrary to them.

Thus therefore he expresseth the nature of the Judgments which he brings on them for their wilfull impenitence, and by this manner of expression he vindicates the righteousness of his proceedings against them in the way of Judgment, it is nothing else but a *Retalation*; he doth but pay them in their own kind; and what can be more equal? for, if they set themselves against him, it is but just that he should be against them; if they are the aggressours, it is fit he vindicate himself, by withstanding of them. It is true, if; when God brings a people into trouble, upon their provoking of him by their sinning against him, he Sanctifies these troubles to them, they will have abundant reason to confess it to his praise. *David* therefore confesseth both the goodness of the Affliction, and the faithfulness of God in inflicting it upon him, *Psa.*119.71. *It is good for me that I have been Afflicted*, and Verse 75. *Thou in faithfulness hast Afflicted me.* And God

many times hath ſuch a gracious deſign as this in the bottom, *Iſa.* 27.9. *By this ſhall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit, to take away his ſin.* But as it doth not alwayes prove ſo, to all that are viſibly in the Covenant; many are made worſe inſtead of being bettered by their Afflictions: ſo it is uncertain what ſhall be the event, till the providence of God determines it, and it is equally certain that the Judgments themſelves are more ways than one to be reputed contrary to them. For,

1. *Herein he accompliſheth the Covenat threatning.* If we look upon the Covenant of God as it is plighted between him and the body of a people profeſſing to be his, it is very evident, that there do not only belong to it gracious promiſes made to their faithfull Obedience unto him, but alſo awfull threatnings againſt all diſobedience; and to theſe threatnings do belong all the Afflictions that are denounced in the word of God againſt the diſobedience of a people that ſtand ſo related to him. There are ſome indeed who do call theſe the promiſes of the Covenant; but it is very *Catachreſtically*, if not a plain *Antiphraſis*: for a promiſe always hath a reſpect to ſomething that is good; whereas theſe things are in their own nature evil, and ſo the Scripture calls them, which is the proper matter of a threatning; hence that, *Jer.* 11. 17. *The Lord of hoſts, that*

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planted thee, hath pronounced evil against thee. And although sometimes eventually they prove for good, and that according to Gods purpose; and on this account, those that are compared to *good Figs*, are said to be *sent to Babilon for their good, Jer.* 24.5. Yet this is besides the nature of them. Gods Children therefore are wont to be *afraid of those Judgments, Psa.* 119. 120. And God doth therefore speaks of them, that he may stirre up this fear, to make them cautious against exposing of themselves to them.

2. Hence, *By them God is said to do men hurt.* So he expresseth it, *Josh.* 24.20. *Then will he turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good.* They are many ways harmfull to a people that are brought under the impressions of them: besides the misery that men do personally suffer by them, in which some are usually more deeply concerned than others, being made the peculiar monuments of the severity of such Judgments; there is great evil which befalls the body of such a people. They are greatly hurt by Famines, by Pestilences, by Sword, by Captivity and bondage, their glory is disgraced by such disasters, their numbers are wasted, and they are made, of a great many, to be but a few; their comforts of life are taken away from them, and they are brought into miserable distress; they are filled with sorrows and bitter mournings; and they are

waſted, impoveriſhed, and brought low by them. and made *to come down & ſit in the duſt ſolitary; they are made a reproach to their enemies, a ſcoff and a ſcorn to all thoſe that hate them,* who point at them and ſay, *This is Zion the out-caſt, &c.* And all this doth very ſenſibly hurt them; and that which doth a man hurt, muſt needs be contrary to him.

3. *Theſe are all of them the effects and diſcoveries of Gods anger: and that is certainly againſt them. Anger* is one of the ſeparating affections, and it makes a diſtance between him that is angry, and thoſe at whom he is ſo. It is true, if there be love in the bottom of theſe Afflictions, (and many times there is ſo, for he hath ſaid, *Rev.* 3.19. *As many as I love, I rebuke & chaſten*; and there is a conſiſtency between love and anger; a father may be angry with his offending ſon, and beat him in anger, but love governs that wrath) then all this is for them in the ſecret counſel of God. But the anger is certain, the courſe of providence bears witneſs to that; whereas there is not a preſent diſcovery of the love which is at work in the management of it: and beſides, this love is uſually reſerved but for a *Remnant*, for whom God hath *thoughts of peace, and to put a good end* to their Afflictions; whereas others are expoſed to his *fierce indignation.* But when God brings theſe evils upon men, he is ſaid to *make away for his*

anger,

anger, Pſal. 78. 50. And how do we find in Scripture, the Hiſtory of ſuch diſpenſations introduced with that preface, *Viz. That the anger of the Lord was kindled againſt Iſrael*, and therefore he did ſo and ſo : and this tells us that God herein walks contrary to them.

4. *And it is directly contrary to mens deſire & hopes.* As ſin is oppoſite to Gods *Hilineſs*, and it *grieves* him, ſo is ſorrow to mens *Inclinations*, and it *vexeth* them. Hence ſuch expreſſions are uſed to ſet it forth by, 2 *Chron.* 15. 5, 6. *Great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the Countries ; for God did vex them with all adverſity.* There is in all men naturally a diſire and craving after felicity ; they would, if poſſible, enjoy a well being, according to their reſentments of it ; and although the fall hath made them ignorant of what is their beſt good, yet they apprehend a goodneſs in *Peace, Health, Proſperity, Credit, Liberty, &c.* theſe are agreeable to them, and therefore they are naturally in love with them ; and the hope of enjoying them, is that which nouriſheth in them, theſe endeavours which they lay out for the compaſſing and ſecuring of them to themſelves. That therefore which is contrary to this, that undermines their peace and health, and deſtroys their proſperity and liberty, *&c.* is that which they hate, and it perplexeth them : and hence, when God by his providence thus deals with them,

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3. *These are all of them the effects and discoveries of Gods anger: and that is certainly against them. Anger* is one of the separating affections, and it makes a distance between him that is angry, and those at whom he is so. It is true, if there be love in the bottom of these Afflictions, (and many times there is so, for he hath said, *Rev.* 3.19. *As many as I love, I rebuke & chasten*; and there is a consistency between love and anger; a father may be angry with his offending son, and beat him in anger, but love governs that wrath) then all this is for them in the secret counsel of God. But the anger is certain, the course of providence bears witness to that; whereas there is not a present discovery of the love which is at work in the management of it: and besides, this love is usually reserved but for a *Remnant*, for whom God hath *thoughts of peace, and to put a good end* to their Afflictions; whereas others are exposed to his *fierce indignation*. But when God brings these evils upon men, he is said to *make away for his anger*,

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them, he croſſeth their aims, and cravings, and expectations, and therein he walketh contrary unto them.

USE. I. This may point us what interpretation to put upon theſe Judgments of God, which we for a long time been labouring under. God, of his rich grace, grant that in the winding up of all, we may find by an happy experience, that there hath been love in them all: and that will only be when they prove to be the bleſſed means of our *through Reformation*, when by them *our iniquities ſhall be purged away from us.* But let us know and be aſſured, that if we remain impenitent under them, there is but very little ſign of this for the preſent. And this is certain, that as long as God is in this way with us, we have him for our Adverſary, and ſo the Prophet interpreted it in, *Lam.* 2. 4. *He ſtood with his right hand as an Adverſary.* He is ſetting of himſelf againſt us: he and we are facing of one another; we by our impenitence are confronting of him, and he by his Judgments is withſtanding of us. We are *Provoking him to jealouſy by our ſins*, and he is *provoking us to jealouſy by his ſtroaks*, ſo it is expreſſed in, *Deut.* 32. 21. And if we do not put this ſence upon the preſent ſtate of affairs, we ſhall deceive our ſelves, and be expoſed to more of his wrath; and is not this a fearfull thing?

Hence,

USE. II.

USE. II. Let it put us upon ſerious & ſolemn thoughts of making our peace with him. Hath God been thus diſcovering of himſelf to us, that he is in good earneſt? Hath he begun to put his threatnings in execution upon us? And have we felt no little part of the ſmart of them, in the many frowns of Providence that we have laboured under? It is high time then for us to bethink our ſelves, and be in good earneſt too, and trifle no longer with him. It was indeed high preſumption in us to dare him to this at firſt; and to ſtout it out ſo long againſt his warnings with which he ſought to reclaim us, that a further proceeding againſt us might ſo have been prevented: but it will be madneſs to a *Paroxiſm* for us to continue in it, when we ſee him up in arms, and cauſing the arrows of his vengeance to fly among us, and he is *Marching through our land in his fury.* It is high time then for us to enter into ſerious Conſultation, whether there be no way to be found in which an end may be put to ſuch a Controverſy, and without delay to get into the way, for if he ſets himſelf againſt us, woe unto us, we can never ſtand before him. Is he angry? Remember who hath ſaid, *Pſa.* 76.7. *Thou, even thou art to be feared, and who may ſtand in thy ſight when once thou art angry?* This then is our preſent buſineſs, the work that the day calls

calls us to, and let us be awakned diligently to attend upon it. It is better for us to *fall down at his feet* by a true repentance, than to *fall before him* by his terrible Judgments: *None ever resisted him and prospered: if his hand take hold on vengeance, he will surely recompence vengeance to his Adversaries.*

DOCT. VI. *There is a certain gradation in the Judgments of God upon an Apostatizing People.*

God here speaks of *Punishing them*, or *smiting of them* (for so the word used in our Text firstly signifies) *Seven times more*, *i.e.* by a seven fold greater and more terrible smiting than that which was before, and he mentions this many times over in the Context, in every of which he still riseth by Sevens. *Seven* is not here to be taken strictly, but for *many*, or *much greater*; and yet, it being a number of perfection, it denotes a very notable and observable Augmentation of the Calamities threatned, in the progress of Gods judicial dispensations, when he passeth over from one scene of Judgments to another, and withall it points us to the gradual progress which he is pleased to make with men this way, and this gives us the advantage to take notice of the wonted dealings of God with a people in

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Covenant with him, different from what is usually towards those that are strangers to him, or towards particular persons. And there are four things that we may here take notice of; only remembring, that God useth much of his *Sovereignty* in the diversifying of his dispensations on this account; as to circumstances; though for the substance this is the ordinary course.

1. *He is wont first to give them warning before he smites them.* These Judgments come for sin, and that according to the threatning. But God being mercifull, and pitiful, doth not fall upon them presently upon every prevarication of their; but, though they give him provocation, he will first offer them admonition; tells them what they have done, how they have exposed themselves by it; tells them he is loth to smite them if they will be reclaimed on easier terms, and accordingly invites them to it: and these warnings are first more gentle, and afterwards more severe; and that is when he not only cautions, but withall threatens them in case they will not presently comply with them: and the reason of all this is, because, if they will by any fair means, or hard words, be reclaimed, there may be a stop, and the threatnings not take place upon them. The reason therefore why he doth proceed to

ſmite them, is rendred to be becauſe they did not take theſe warnings; what doth God himſelf ſay, *Zeph.*3.7. *I ſaid, ſurely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive inſtruction.* And ſee how God interprets his own threatnings, *Jer.*18.7,8. *At what time I ſpeak concerning a nation, to pluck up, and pull down and deſtroy; if that nation turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do to them*; Repentance is here aſcribed to him after the manner of men; the meaning is, I will not do it. He limits the threatning to this *Hypotheſis.* God hath that reſpect for his people, that if *Chiding* will do, he will not *Smite*; if *Words* will prevail, he will not proceed to *Blows.* It is therefore ſaid that *He doth not afflict willingly*, and this work of puniſhing them is called *his ſtrange work*; whereas he many times comes upon others ſuddenly, and they are ſurprized and cut off without any fore-warning given them.

2. *When he doth ſmite, he doth not do all at once.* He doth not cut off his people at one ſtroak, though they have given him provocation enough to do it. He doth not begin and make an end at the ſame time, and by the ſame Judgment by which he firſt Afflicted them: but if ever it muſt come to that, by reaſon of their wofull obſtinacy and refuſing to receive Correction by his Afflictive providences, there

is a very conſiderable time in which that is doing; and many leiſurely ſteps are taken before it arrives at this. When God threatens *Niniveh*, we find how it is expreſt, *Nah.* 1.9. *He will make an utter end: Affliction ſhall not riſe up the ſecond time.* Whereas it is obſervable in our *Text*, laid by the *Context*, that there is a proceſs from one to another, and from that to another, and there is a long time paſſeth before the evil be finiſhed, and the laſt ſcene brought in: and if we obſerve, we ſhall find, that it was ſo long, after God had begun in his Judgments with his backſliding people of old, before they came to be extirpated, that the prophets begun to be mocked, and the people grew into ſuch ſecurity, that they concluded it ſhould never be, and begun to make bold challenges about it. Now the reaſon of Gods uſing this method is, becauſe he is in a way of *Diſcipline* with his people: he is tr
if they will be *amended* by his rods, and
fore, in wiſdom, he proves another
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at laſt, but be led to repentance. It
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3. *Hence he is alſo wont to begin wi*

more tolerable ſtroaks. He doth not come to the extremity at once, he proves them firſt with *Rods*, before he proceeds to make uſe of *Scorpions* in puniſhing of them. And there is a double conſideration under which this may be obſerved; It is either with reſpect to the *Judgments themſelves*, or to the *degrees* in which he doth inflict them. Hence we have ſuch a difference mentioned, *Iſa.*9.1. *When at firſt he lightly afflicted, &c. and afterwards did more grievouſly afflict her.* There are ſome Afflictions which in themſelves are far leſs formidable than other; the nature of man is not ſo affrighted at them, and hereupon there is not ſo great a diſcovery of the anger of God, at leaſt as to the heat of it: we find *David* choſe rather *to fall into the hands of God than of men*, and God many times begins with ſuch; theſe are the forlorn of his army which are firſt ſent up to alarum a ſinning people. He brings upon them *Scarcity* of the comforts of this by *cutting ſhort* the fruits of the earth, and ſ them with *Epidemical ſickneſſes*, where- are *brought low*, and the like. There ſeveral degrees in the ſame kinds of ns, whereby they prove more or leſs g to a people: and God uſeth to be- e lower degrees; he comes firſt a *the houſe of Ephraim*, *Hoſ.*5.12. He dimi-

diminiſheth them, and ſhortens their comforts, brings difficulties and ſtraits upon them, before he falls upon them in the ſeverity of theſe. He brings ſcarcity before a killing Famine, gentler ſickneſſes before deſtroying Peſtilences, &c. And the reaſon of this is, becauſe he will prove them to ſee if *their hearts be tender*, and ſenſible of the eaſier touches of his anger, that if they ſo be, there may be an end, and no further proceſs made in the way of his wrath againſt them.

4. *But if the more eaſy Corrections will not do, he then goes on to ſmite them harder.* If his hand may be ſtayed from this, well; but if it be not, he is not wont to tarry always where he was, and do no more, but he will, in due ſeaſon, go a ſtep further, and make them to undergoe greater and more grievous Calamities, he doubles his ſtroaks, and pulls up the floodgates higher, and makes the gap in the hedge wider, ſo that *their Plagues become great and wonderfull*: and this is obſervable in a treble reſpect; he doth it, partly by greatning the ſame ſtroaks, and ſo adding to the degrees of it, partly by bringing in of greater and more terrible Judgments, ſuch as are more frightfull to men, and which carry in them more of his indignation, and in their own nature are dreadfull: if ſcarcity and ſickneſs will not do, if Famines,

mines, and Peſtilences prevail not, he calls for a *waſting Sword* upon his land, and gives it a Commiſſion *to devour, and make it ſelf drunk with the blood of the ſlaine.* Partly alſo by heaping up of manifold Calamities at once upon them, involving of them in all ſorts of difficulties, as, *Ezek.*14.21. *How much more when I ſend my four ſore Judgments upon Jeruſalem, the Sword, and the Famine, and the noiſome Beaſts, and the Peſtilence*: and theſe lay all waſt before them, and they that eſcape the one, are devoured of the other, and now they are terribly diſtreſt. Hence, how are all terrible miſeries heaped together in the laſt ſtep of the progreſs in our Context? *Verſe* 29. *&c.* And ſo it is expreſſed in *Deut.*28.61. *Alſo every ſickneſs, & every plague, &c. them will the Lord bring upon thee, untill thou be deſtroyed.*

USE. I. We may from hence take a rule to judge our preſent ſtate by. This manner of Gods dealing hath been obſervably exemplified upon us; ſuch a progreſs as this we have been under: and it is now a long time ſince God hath begun it, and it continues unto this day. How gradually hath our God been going with us? How many ſteps hath he taken? And how are our Calamities grown and increaſed? And to this day they remain upon us, and ſtill look if they were on the growing hand.

hand. It is a great many years ſince God begun to ſignalize his diſpleaſure againſt this people, and, as he hath been exceeding patient with us, in that he is to this day gotten no further, notwithſtanding all that we have done to provoke him to it; ſo he hath been progreſſive with us; how often hath he changed his providences? And to what an height are our perplexities grown? Nor is there yet a ceſſation. May we not ſay as it is in, *Iſa.*9.12. *For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is ſtretched out ſtill.* And what is the matter of inſtruction that we have to learn from it? May it not well be that which followeth, *Verſ.*13. *For the people returneth not to him that ſmiteth them.* God ſurely hath been following the *Hypotheſis* laid down in our *Text*. It is becauſe we are ſtill walking contrary to him, and will not come to a Compoſition with him. Let it then leave Conviction upon us, and tell us that we are not as we ſhould be, otherwiſe God would have been otherwiſe to us than he is. And this ſhould awaken us to Conſider what we have to do.

USE. II. Let us then ſee and admire at the wonderful Patience of God expreſt to us herein. Surely, though we have cauſe deeply to be abaſed to think that it ſhould be ſo with us as it is; yet we have deſerved other, and a worſe

manner of dealing from him: and thoug
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with it. If he had cut us off as ſoon as we b
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proceeds ſo ſlowly in them all, is to be co
dially and thankfully acknowledged by us
and we have reaſon to ſay, *It is of the Lor
mercy that we are not conſumed*, Lam. 3.22. A
then there is a great awakning in it to put
upon diligent ſeeking unto him, ſo there is
bundant encouragement for us ſo to do; w
may rationally argue from hence, that he wh
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have his hands held by us, and, as it were
wonders that we are ſo fooliſh that we tak
no more care to do it; and therefore,

USE III. *Let it rouſe us all up to this Refo
mation.* You here ſee how it is; we have a
holy God to do withall, who is *jealous for h
great name*, and though he has a reſerve o
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rently teſtifying his diſpleaſure againſt o
ways and doings, and he is ſtill growing upo

us in it, and we cannot ſee to the other end of theſe dark diſpenſations. Why then ſhould we be ſo ſtiff-necked and hard hearted? what good ſhall we get by a reſolute purſuance of our own ways, againſt all the endeavours that are laid out upon us to reduce us from them? have we not felt enough already to our ſorrow? And ſhall we force him to lay more and heaviour Calamities upon us ſtill? Oh let us be wiſe! It was a good advice that *Pharaohs* ſervants gave to him, *Exod* 10.7. *How long ſhall this man be a ſnare to us? let the men go, &c. knoweſt thou not yet that Egypt is deſtroyed?* And may I not well ſay, how long ſhall our ſins befool us? how long ſhall we ſtand by them, and not part with them? do we not know that they have already almoſt ruined us? Remember then, that though God hath gone far with us in his Judgments, and encreaſed them more than once upon us, yet there are more and more terrible ones behind, ready to be poured out upon us? He hath not ſhot all his arrows yet; the ſharpeſt are ſtill in his quiver; *and he ſeems to have a fearfull one now upon the ſtring*: and ſhall we not fall down at his feet and prevent it? Shall we yet dare him to it, and force him to make us feel the bittereſt of it? Oh let it not once be!

DOCT. VII. God is wont to use intermission in his Afflicting of a people that will n reform under his Judgments.

When he begins in a way of Judgmen with them; when he takes his rod in han and smites them, and they are not bettered b these smitings, yet as he proceeds very slowl in renewing and adding severity to his stroak according as was observed under the forme *Doctrine*, so he makes many stops and delays i his progress, although he *takes them out of c fire & kindleth another upon them*, as he threaten to do by them, *Ezek.*15.7. Yet he hath h intervalls between. The manner of expressio in the Text notes that God seeks, and conse quently waits for their *Reformation by the things*, and that signifies such an intermissio as this. And there are two things wherein will be more especially discovered.

1. *He doth not speedily pass from one Judg ment to another.* When he brings one sort o Affliction upon his people, as a Testimony o his displeasure at them, he continues them un der that for a considerable time, before he goe on to another; we read of a *Famine* in *David* time that continued for *three years* successively and no other Judgment is recorded to inte vene, though the procuring cause of it was n present

preſently removed ; 2 *Sam.* 21. And ſo in *Eliſha's* time of a Famine which laſted *three years*, by which *Iſrael*, under *Ahabs* wicked reign was diſtreſſed ; 1 *Kings* 18. 1. And of one that laſted *Seven years* in the days of *Eliſha*, in the time when *Joram*, *Ahab's* ſon, reigned, 2 *King.* 8. 1. And the reaſon why God doth thus is, becauſe he will wait to ſee what efficacy this will have, before he takes a further courſe with them. He doth not come to *kill* them, but to *cure* them, if it may be ; and hence he acts like a wiſe *Phyſitian*, who, when he hath adminiſtred a proper ſort of *Potion*, will wait for the working of it, a competent time, not looking that it will work, as ſoon as it is down, and if one potion do not do, he will give another of the ſame, and it may be be a larger doſe of it, before he leaves that of, and goes about to try any other experiment : he doth not preſently ſay this will not do, though it doth not immediately appear in the deſirable effects of it. God ſaith, it may be they will bethink themſelves, and lay this Judgment to heart ; and by the continuance of it be brought to ſolemn Conſideration, which may ſet them upon Reformation ; and therefore, till the Judgment comes to be notoriouſly deſpiſed by them, he many times continues them under the exerciſe of it.

2. *And he ſometimes gives them a preſent de-*

liverance, and reſpite from the troubles which they have been exerciſed with. There are very frequently *lucid intervals* to be obſerved in the courſe of Gods providence towards a ſinning people, whom he hath under the rod, and this notwithſtanding they do not anſwer the end of theſe Afflictions, but do abide in their degeneracy. He doth *not always grieve them* but, though they do not hearken to him though they do not ceaſe to provoke him but are ſenſeleſs, careleſs, and go on in their way, yet he extends a great deal of his pity to them, *He remembers their frame*, and he interpoſeth ſome great deliverance or other, and hereby tries them between with his mercy to ſee if thus he may break their hearts with kindneſs, and let them experience how unwilling he is to do them hurt, if they do not force him to it. Hence he cauſeth the ſtormy clouds which hang over them, and ſhowred trouble on them to break, and ſome beams of light and comfort to dart in between; and all to try if mercy after Judgment will do any thing with them; if his being before hand in his kindneſs to them, will melt their hard hearts into a compliance with his calls and counſels. And hereby at leaſt he will leave them the more *inexcuſable* if they yet perſiſt in their obſtinancy. Thus we find that in *Ahabs* reign though the foregoing Famine had not wrought

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the expected *Reformation*, and God brought a Sword after it; yet God gave Israel two signal Victories over the *Syrians*, who had sorely distressed them, 1 *Kings* 20. And then in *Jorams* reign, God succoured that people with a strange relief in a grievous Famine, and frighted away their enemies, when they were just ready to swallow them up, 2 *Kings* 7. And agen afterwards in the days of *Jeroboam* the second, of which we have that observable passage, 2 *Kings* 14 24,25,26. *He did that which was evil, &c. he restored the coast of Israel, &c. for the Lord saw the Affliction of Israel, &c.* And many a time hath God done after this manner with his people, when the entertainment they have given to his Judgments hath been a Provocation to him to do otherwise.

USE. I. Learn hence how unreasonable a thing it is for such a people to maintain their rebellion against God. What reason can there possibly be given for their refusing to return to him, and reform the things that give him offense? How wonderfully doth God herein shew his tenderness and great compassion towards them? And one would think it should be enough to melt hearts of Adamant: that the hardest flint should dissolve under the influence of it. What greater provocation can there be given to God, than to have his *Word* despised, and

Rod

Rod condemned, and a people under the experiment of both, obſtinately ſtopping their ears and hardning their hearts? This is enough to put him upon reſolving to ſpare them no more, to turn his *Rod* into a *Sword*, and paſs from *Correction* to *Vengeance*, and cut them off at once. And ſhall he, for all this, hold back his hand when it is up, and ſhew his great kindneſs to a people that are not affected with his Judgment? Shall he endeavour thus to win them, after he hath Afflicted them to no purpoſe? And ſhall they for all, and after this perſiſt in their former evil courſes? May he not call upon *Heaven and Earth to be aſtoniſhed at this*? How horrible and amazing a thing muſt it needs be?

USE. II. Let it put us upon the tryal in this regard. Hath not our God dealt thus by us more than once or twiſe? Have there not been very notable reſpites which he hath afforded unto us in the midſt of our troubles? Hath he not mercifully given us ſeveral breathing times, and theſe conſiderable, between one Calamity and another? And what improvement is it that we have made of them? Did we not begin to hope that he was in the way of returning again to us? But have there not new clouds riſen again afterwards, and ſhowred down a freſh tempeſt upon us? May we not

not uſe the moan which the Prophet doth in the name of his people? *Jer.*8.15. *We looked for peace, but behold no good; and for a time of health, and behold trouble.* And it is good for us to enquire whence this is: ſurely if we had rightly underſtood the things of our peace, and accordingly improved ſuch an opportunity wiſely, it would not have been thus. If, when God looked as if he were coming towards us in *away of mercy*; we had cordially returned to him in *away of Repentance and Reformation*; thoſe *Daunings* of deliverance, would have been the *day break* of our Salvations, and God would have eſtabliſhed us in his favour. Let the thought then of this, convince us of our grievous folly, and lay us low before God. Alas! did we not begin arrogantly to ſay, *the bitterneſs of death is over*? to think that now the Judgments of God were at an end, and we ſhould ſee no more of them? and thereupon to grow the more confident, and ſecure, and remorcleſs, and ſo to forget the obligations lying upon us, and thereupon to promiſe our ſelves to enjoy peace, though we continued in our old way and courſe? yea and hereupon have thrown by our thoughts of Reformation, ſuppoſing that all matters ſtood right and well between God and us? Is it not ſo? and if thus it be, how righteouſly hath God dealt with us, in raiſing up of new troubles,

and bringing us into more perplexing Calamities than before? How muſt our mouths be ſtopt, and the holineſs of God be adored by us in this reſpect? Certainly the face of providence calls aloud, for our putting of our ſelves upon ſuch a trial; and let us account it our intereſt to comply with it ſolemnly.

DOCT. VIII. As long as a profeſſing people remain unreformed, God will proceed in his Judgments againſt them.

This is the very ſum and ſubſtance of the threatning contained in our *Text*: and it is *thrice* beſides repeated in our *Context*. There may be many changes in the proceſs which God is uſing with ſuch a people, and he may ſee meet now and then to give them ſome intermiſſions in that proceſs: and herein he acts his own Sovereign pleaſure: but for all this he will not ſo put an end to their troubles, nor is it to be expected. There are two things contained in this Doctrine, *Viz.*

1. *That there will be a proceeding in the way of Judgments.* When God begins to take ſuch a courſe with them, he will hold on in it, as long as they hold on in a courſe of impenitence and obſtinacy: and though he hath kept them never ſo long under them; yet if there be no repentance, no *Reformation* wrought

on

on them by all, he will not ſo leave off, but will add ſtill to Afflict them: he will proceed in his way, as long as they proceed in theirs. We therefore find, that when God had enumurated how many ſeveral courſes he had taken with Iſrael to reclaim them, and all had proved unſucceſsful, and that is the remark which is made at the foot of every one of them, *yet have ye not returned unto me ſaith the Lord, Am.* 4.6. *&c.* He gives them aſſuredly to und erſtand that he will go on, and therefore bids them to look and prepare for it, *Verſ.* 12. *Therefore thus will I do unto O Iſrael; and becauſe I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, Oh Iſrael. q. d.* Look for it, make ready; it ſhall certainly be.

2. *That there will be an encreaſing or aggravating of theſe troubles.* There ſhall not only be a continuance, but an augmentation; they ſhall meet with more and more ſevere; they ſhall be plagued yet deeper and deeper, and inextricably into their Afflictions and diſtreſſes. He therefore threatens to lay aſide all pitty, *Jer.* 13.14. *I will not have pitty, nor mercy, but deſtroy them. Ezek.* 5.11. *Neither ſhall mine eye ſpare, nor will I have any pitty.* And this is intended, in his *Puniſhing* of them *Seven times.* And the ground of his thus proceeding will appear, in the Conſideration of theſe things.

1. *A Profeſſing Covenant people are under greateſt Obligations to glorify God, which is done by their faithfull obedience to his Commands.* It is for this that God hath formed them into a people, under ſuch circumſtances, *Iſa.* 43.21. *This people have I formed for my ſelf, they ſhall ſhew forth my praiſe.* God requires it of them, and expects it from them; he doth not look for it from others to whom he hath not ſo revealed himſelf, but he ſaith of ſuch a people for whom he hath done ſo much, more than for others, *ſurely they will ſerve me, and honour me.*

2. *When therefore ſuch a people degenerate, they fall from the great end, which they were employed, and every way advantaged to ſerve to, and ſo they diſhonour inſtead of honouring him.* And the truth is, there are none in the world that reflect ſo much of diſhonour upon God, as ſuch do: all the ſin and wickedneſs of an *Heathen* people, doth not bring ſo much reproach to his name, as the backſlidings of ſuch doe; his name ſuffers more by them, than by all the profligate abominations of thoſe who are ſtrangers to the Covenant: becauſe his name is not ſo much concerned in them. And therefore, when theſe do the very ſame things for the matter of them, which the Heathen do; they do *a great deal worſe* than theſe, and the reaſon of it is becauſe it is they that do it.

3. *Hence*

3. *Hence by their Apostasy they render themselves unprofitable: and there are none more so than they.* All the cost, and care, and peculiar husbandry that God hath laid out upon them is lost; he hath been at a great deal more of expense upon his *Vineyard*, than upon the waste wilderness; he hath fenced it, cleered it, and planted it, and afforded it a great deal of special tendance and this, as to any fruit which they bring forth for him, is thrown away upon it. God on this account compares his people to a vine, which is a sort of plant, that if it bear well, and good grapes plentifully, is very excellent and usefull; but if it doth not so bear, it is *good for nothing but to make a fire of*: *Ezek.* 15. *begin.* Other trees, though they do not bear fruit, yet they may serve for many other uses, but the vine is altogether unserviceable in any other way but this.

4. *God in Afflicting of them, useth means, if it may be obtained, that he may bring them to their fruitfulness again.* While they enjoyed times of peace and prosperity, and all things went according to their desire, they grew wanton and left off to bring forth fruit to his praise; now these afflictive providences which he brings upon them, were his pruning and cutting of them; he hereby pares off their excrescencies, and lets them blood, and this, if any thing, looks as if it were probable to re-

cover them again. That this is the direct deſign of theſe Judgments, herein appears, becauſe God ſaith, *if they be not reformed by theſe things*, and that plainly intimates, that *Reformation* was the thing that was looked for by them: and for this reaſon we ſhall find him ſo often complaining of them, becauſe this was not the effect following upon them, ſee, *Iſa.* 1.5. *Why ſhould ye be ſmitten any more? ye will revolt more and more*, and, *Jer.* 2.30. *In vain have I ſmiten your Children; they would not receive Correction.* Now a thing is then ſaid to be in vain, when the end of it is fruſtrated.

5. *Hence, as long as they remain not bettered hereby, their* benefit *and his* Glory *is concerned in his proceeding further in the courſe of his Judgments. Their benefit is deeply intereſted in it*: for they are no whit bettered by theſe Afflictions, till they are wrought up unto Reformation. The Phyſick that is Adminiſtred unto men, works not for them, as long as it doth but irritate the diſeaſe, and makes the ill humours to work more ſtrongly, but doth not remove them: then it works kindly, when it conquers the malady. And truly, if God leaves off Afflicting before ſuch a people be reformed, they are apt to be thereby the more hardned; and when God is weary of ſmiting of them by reaſon of their obſtinacy, it is a ſad ſign that he is about to give them

up

up as desperate, *Isa.*1.5. *Psa.*81.11,12 and 95. 10,11. And when God lays by his *Rod* after he hath been using it, before his People are amended, it bodes that he intends next to take up the *Sword*, when he hath let them alone a while without check to fill up their measure. *His Glory also is here concerned*; He is in honour bound to bear a Testimony against the Apostasies of his People; and he must and will be at length too hard for them, one way or other his glory is trampled upon by their impenitence, his holiness cannot endure that it be always so: and therefore we are told that if after all endeavours, and utmost patience drawn forth into long suffering, their returning be not obtained, at last it must come to extirpation, and scattering of them into the corners of the earth. The sum is, either Gods name must suffer; or else a people that are departed from their Covenant Obligations, and will by no means be reformed, must be cut off; and so made the monuments of his righteous revenge, because they would not, *hearken to his voice*; *Matth.*23.37, 38. *How often would I have gathered you, but you would not; behold your house is left unto you desolate.*

USE. I. This truth gives us a sad Prognostick of a People that are left to insensibleness and hard-

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neſs of heart, under the ſmitings of God. It tells us how miſerable they are like to be. We are here given to underſtand that if they are reſolved, God is reſolved too: if they ſay *there is no hope*, but we will follow our own ways, and will not forſake them, God will alſo ſay, *there is no hope*, but you muſt ſee and feel the weight of the hand of his diſpleaſure, and be made the monuments of his ſtupendous wrath. The beſt that is to be concluded concerning ſuch a People, is that they are like to be made to feel more amazing Judgments, than heretofore, there is no hope of an end being put to them, unleſs it be come to that, that he hath done ſtriving with them in this way; and that is abundantly more formidable. And although God can, if he will, break their hearts after all, and when no means will do it, yet his Spirit is able to melt them down, and caſt them anew; and ſometimes he doth exalt his Sovereign Grace in doing of it, as, *Iſa.*57.18. *I ſmote him, and he went on frowardly; I have ſeen his ways and will heal him.* Yet this is Arbitrary with him; if they belong to his Election of Grace, it ſhall be ſo; but that is a Secret thing; but as to the preſent poſture of things, and referring to the *Articles* of the Covenant between God and ſuch a People, it ſpeaks ſadly, and wofully bodes that their Calamities are but begun upon them.

them. We may count from the breaking out of his displeasure, but who shall live to see the quenching of it, God alone knows; and whether it may at last end graciously or no, we may expect to see God acting of fearfull *Tragedies* among them before he hath done, and we may be sure that he will either *bow* them, or *break* them in pieces.

USE. II. Let it then Solemnly call upon us, seriously to think of, and speedily to improve this Truth to a through **Reformation.** Let us take it to be a voice from Heaven to awaken us this day to the practice of this duty. God hath now for a long time been calling us aloud to *REFORMATION*; and that by many ways and courses that he hath been practising with us. How many years since he put it into the mouths of his Servants to complain of the Degenerating of this People, from the Spirit and design of those that were first employed in the Planting of these *Churches*? How many years is it since there have been Convincing and openly Confessed witnesses in the Providence of God, to the displeasure he had taken at that degeneracy? And doth he not continue these tokens unto this day? But our ears have been sealed; and though we have been under some Consternations, especially when some distressing Afflicti-

on hath broken in upon us, yet how little is there done mean while, towards the putting an end to Gods Controverſy? God is ſtill onward in his way, and proceeding from one ſtep to another, and going forward to puniſh us more and more, *and ſhall we never be inſtructed? Oh when ſhall it once be?* Is there nothing to be done at ſuch a day as this is? Are all things right? Have there been no open and notorious declenſions from God among us? Or are we recovered out of them? Is every thing among us as it ſhould be? *Why then is his hand ſtretched out ſtill?* What means the continuing and blowing up of the heat of his anger? And is it no bodies work to begin in this matter? or is it not every ones buſineſs to ſet about it in his place? If we are in a *Private Capacity*, and cannot actively influence the Publick ſo as to mend it, yet may we not mend one? Are there not our Perſonal iniquities in the heap of *Ephah*? or have we carried it ſo evenly and holily as to be altogether clear of this guilt? Who of us is there that dares to appear, and own that we have done nothing to the continuance of theſe Judgments? And if every one would do that which is to be done at home in this regard, it would ſurely Contribute not a little to a general *Reformation*: and we may by an holy exemplary Converſation, and

earneſt

earneſt Prayers to God, help forward this work. If we are in a *Publick ſtation*, and thereby advantaged peculiarly to put forward ſuch a work; ſhall we *look one upon another*, and ſtrain Complements, who ſhall begin in it? Shall we not rather joyn hearts, and hands, and counſels in this buſineſs? Shall any of us draw back, and refuſe to be concerned in it; or ſhall we withſtand it? *Note that man an Enemy to God and his People.* I ſhall not here enlarge in enumerating the *Catalogue* of thoſe things that want to be lookt into and after in this *Reformation*, but earneſtly wiſh that it may be a matter of Solemn Conſultation and enquiry. Only let me ſay, this work muſt be done ſooner or later: God expects it, he calls aloud for it, he ſaith that he will have it. And what will it advantage us to dally and delay, till God hath multiplied his Judgments upon us, and made us a *by word and an aſtoniſhment to the world*? Aſſure we our ſelves it may be worſe, but it will not be really better with us, till we come roundly to this work. Why then ſhould we provoke a good and a gracious God to more wrath, and pull down on our own heads more of his fearful Judgments? Stay him now; ruine elſe may be not far off. We have tried our carnal policy already, and have found it nothing to avail us, but rather

to entangle us in greater perplexities, and more inextricable: let us now essay the Spiritual policy. Resolve we, from this day forward to make diligent search after, and utterly to renounce all our sins; to Return as one man to the Lord; and set our selves in good earnest about this work: and I dare say, *God will be jealous for the land, and pitty his People; and then will he arise as a strong man after new wine, plead our cause for us, and bring us forth out of darkness into the light, set our feet upon a Rock, and put a new Song into our mouths, even Praise unto our GOD.* Amen.

FINIS.